

Safety On The Road

The Issue Of Speed

*The laws
of physics apply
to everyone...*

When driving on a freeway it's easy to lose your sense of humor – and your sense of speed. When you are driving fast for a long time, it becomes difficult to tell just how fast you are going. You can become complacent and too comfortable with the speed you are traveling, even if it is over the limit or too fast for road conditions. Glance at your speedometer frequently to make sure you are driving within the posted limit.

In determining an appropriate speed, consider these factors:

- Your speed should always be within the legal limit.
 - Your speed should be consistent with other traffic to reduce conflicts. Driving too slowly can inflame other drivers to pass dangerously and undertake other risky behavior, while driving too fast increases the chance of serious accidents.
 - Your speed should also be based on visibility, traffic, weather and road conditions. It is possible to be speeding below the posted limit – if you are driving too fast for the existing conditions.
 - Excessive speed has been shown to be a major factor in the severity of traffic accidents. You can visualize it yourself: A vehicle traveling at a low rate of speed strikes a roadside obstacle and has minimum damage.
- The same vehicle traveling at a high rate of speed strikes the same obstacle and damage is catastrophic.
- The issue of speed becomes even more urgent when dealing with large vehicles such as large trucks, where the size increases the force at impact. The speed issue takes on an added dimension if the truck is also carrying hazardous cargo. That is why many companies have written policies banning radar detectors, and policies for staying within the speed limits. Some trucks may also have on-board speed monitoring computers, mostly for the sake of safety but also for keeping fuel consumption down.
 - The condition of your tires affects the speed at which you can travel safely. Worn or bald tires decrease the traction and increase stopping distance. Summer treads used in winter conditions also affect control and stopping distance. Use the correct tires for the season.
 - Monitor the speed of other vehicles and adjust yours to compensate for them if their speed is excessive or inappropriate for conditions. Pull over and let them go by. Don't compete.

The laws of physics apply to everyone – even good drivers with excellent reflexes. Speed increases the stopping distance. If you are driving too fast, you may not be able to stop in time to avoid a crash.

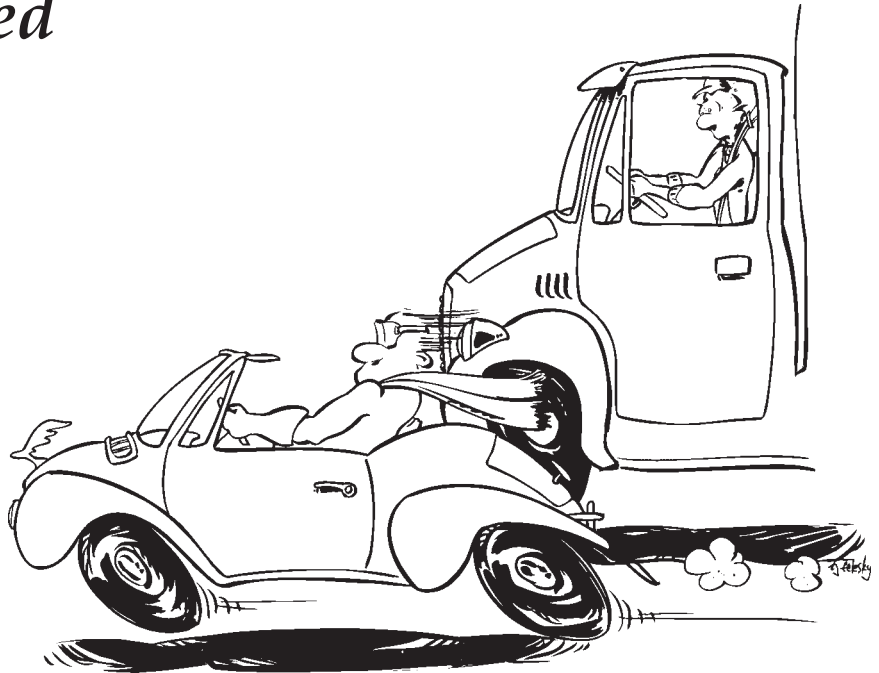
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